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COMMANDERS DIGEST

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DOD Sees Advances In Vietnamization Efforts

The military strength of the Republic of Vietnam is nearing its programmed level; pacification is showing material signs of accomplishment, and the economy—although wartime inflationary prone—has strong motivation toward stability when circumstances permit.

Top level Department of Defense officials who are in daily contact with the situation in Vietnam gave this assessment, but cautioned that although the enemy's capability can be reasonably ascertained, no one knows his plans or intentions.

One Defense official put it this way: "The enemy still has a sizeable force. We can't read their minds. The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese have at least 240,000 men in the field and this is a sizeable force. Localized defeats by units of the South Vietnamese certainly won't mean that the Vietnamization effort has toppled or gone under. Any enemy military force can mass its strength at a given point and win a temporary and local victory."

Then, too, many times enemy plans go askew. From an endless stream of information, intelligence reports, documents and interrogation of captured enemy prisoners it is learned that plans have been made to attack such and such an area on a given date. Frequently this date will come and go and nothing happens.

The problem is to Vietnamize the war and Vietnamize pacification so that the Regional Forces (RF) and Popular Forces (PF) can maintain rural security with the Army of the Republic of Vietnam handling the large enemy forces. When this becomes fact, Vietnamization will be militarily complete. With this improvement in pacification there will be corresponding improvement in the other areas of Vietnamization.

For example, the economy would then start booming with crops coming to market and people on the move. This calls for secure roads and bridges. The ARVN is developing engineer battalions and with the help of U.S. forces roads are now being widened, a solid road-bed built and paving added.

In line with economic development and better transportation the U.S. Army and Vietnamese engineers are supervising the paving or improvement of more than 2,500 miles of national or interprovincial highways. More than 1,000 miles were due to be finished by the end of 1969. Of significance is the fact that when a new road to the Phuoc Long Provincial capital, Song Be, was opened, the prices in that city dropped appreciably. The new 40-mile road from Can Tho to Soc Trang in the Mekong Delta has cut travel time from three and one-half hours to one.

Defense officials say Vietnamization is working, and working well. They add, however, that it involves many things, even on the military side including transfer of equipment. Most of the equipment has been provided for the ground forces. The Vietnam Air Force still has some coming although several squadrons of different types of aircraft have been provided. About 250 boats have been provided Vietnamese naval

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The Military Man Personifies Young America—Secretary Kelley

"The military man personifies young America—rich and poor and middle class, black and white, scholar and school drop-out, big city type, small towner and farm boy."

This description of today's serviceman was made by Assistant Secretary of Defense (Manpower and Reserve Affairs) Roger T. Kelley before the Women's Forum on National Security.

Following is Secretary Kelley's February 3 speech concerning "Youth and Our Nation's Security" given in Washington, D.C.:

I am grateful for the opportunity to address your group n this important occasion. On sight, I am inclined to believe that the influence and perception of tonight's audience may be exceeded only by the charm of its individual members. This means you are an impressive group of national opinion molders.

I like the theme of your conference—*Youth and Our Nation's Security*—for it shows your recognition that the capability, attitude and performance of our young people will —more than any other force—determine how secure our nation is to be.

If you will permit me a personal note, this subject of youth is one in which Mrs. Kelley and I have a vested interest. We have six young people of our own. We are immensely

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Secretary Kelley Shares Opinion On Youth, Our Nation's Security

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proud of them and, like all parents, we are concerned about their future.

I want to say something this evening from which you can draw your own conclusion about youth and our nation's security. Too often, it seems to me, adults generalize and emotionalize about youth on the basis of superficial evidence —the cut of their clothes, the length of their hair. Young people may be considered responsible by their elders if they conform to the viewpoint and the life style of middle age, and immature if they oppose it.

When young people enter the Armed Forces, the supply sergeant, the barber, and the commanding officer eliminate many of the external symbols of individual taste and personality. So, when one deals with youth in the military, as I do, it is easier to judge youth based on performance rather than just appearance.

And the Armed Forces offer a good sample of American youth, for the military has over three million American men and women, which makes it one of the largest organizations in America with a common mission.

The average age of its members is 22.6 years, which makes the military probably the youngest adult organization in America.

The military man personifies young America—rich and poor and middle class, black and white, scholar and school drop-out, big city type, small towner and farm boy. He speaks with the accent of Harlem and Harvard, of River City and Richmond, of Laramie and Los Angeles. He is the raw muscle of America. He enters the military forces no longer a boy and yet not quite a man.

For most young people, military service is a two-year experience. They enter it during their 19th year, bringing with them all the talents and all the biases acquired in their youthful lives. Most of them re-enter civilian life two years later, during their 21st year, with the indelible imprint of their military experience. Whether this is good or bad, whether it makes for a better or worse society, depends upon what these young people do for the Armed Forces, and what the Armed Forces do for them. Let's look first at what they do for the Armed Forces.

The most critical test of youth in the Armed Forces today is Vietnam. Many say it is the most difficult war in American history. Its objective, which is widely misunderstood in America, is to secure the independence and self-determination of South Vietnam by convincing North Vietnam of the futility of aggression. The objective is not, and never has been, to destroy North Vietnam. Nor is it to establish an American satellite in Southeast Asia. The objective, I repeat, is to give the people of South Vietnam the right of self-determination.

A noted newspaperman and military historian, Brigadier General S. L. A. Marshall, has called our foot soldier in Vietnam, *"The finest American fighting man of all times."* By the standard of all experts who have observed him, he compares with the best of his counterparts of earlier generations, and there is no higher standard against which he could be measured.

Assistant Secretary of Defense Kelley

The mind's eye may now behold the combat soldier with rifle ready, prepared for the kill. This has always been the ugly part of war—the part which our fighting man accepts with courage even when it entails the greatest personal sacrifice—his own life. This doesn't mean that our young fighting man is caught up in the nobility of his sacrifice. He detests war, would prefer having no part of it, but accepts his role in it as a difficult but necessary duty to his country. The typical young American's attitude toward war and military service was well expressed by Lieutenant John K. Andrews, USN, when he said, *"I realized enroute to my Officer Candidate School Commission that many of us would never have volunteered for the program if it had not been for the uncomfortable pressures of the draft and we made no secret of it, but I also saw then and since that few among us fail to grow in courage, unselfishness, and leadership, during our Navy service."*

He went on to say, *"To those who decry all war, we who are in the business can confess a deeper abhorrence of it than any civilian is equipped to feel. Fighting wars means ending lives and we fervently prefer to help build fuller lives for all men. But we do insist that war, terrible as it is, is yet a lesser evil than oppression, injustice and dishonor."*

In assessing young Americans' contribution in Vietnam, bear in mind that our mission there involves considerably more than fighting. It involves all aspects of Vietnamizing that war—training the Vietnamese to accept ever-increasing responsibility for fighting it, and for providing their own logistic and other support activities. It also involves assisting the Vietnamese to build and strengthen the whole fabric of their society—pacifying hamlets and villages, restoring orderly commerce and government within them, and building schools and homes and hospitals. The young American is in Vietnam

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DOD Sees Advances In Vietnamization Efforts

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forces. Recent emphasis has been to combine U.S. and Vietnamese naval commands in all operational areas.

In some areas of the Delta, the Vietnamese have already assumed full operational control. Since June 1969 the Vietnamese have taken the responsibility for several inshore areas in the 4th Coastal Zone and have increased surveillance operations control on the coastal waterways. It was pointed out that since October 1968 the Vietnamese Navy has experienced an increase of 75 per cent. When it reaches the planned personnel strength level, it should be the 14th largest Navy in the world.

The Vietnamese Air Force has shown steady increase with VNAF forward air controllers directing more than 50 per cent of the total air strikes in IV Corps. The percentage of VNAF sorties flown as compared to the number of attack sorties flown by USAF, USN, USMC in South Vietnam has steadily increased from the beginning of 1969 and is now (December) about 30 per cent of the total. It is interesting to note the VNAF remains an all volunteer force.

Except for minor additions, the activation of ARVN combat units is complete. With a few exceptions all equipment requirements are being met on time.

As Vietnamese units gain fighting effectiveness, they take over more of the operations in a geographical area and the U.S. units are reduced or phased out. This has occurred just south of the eastern part of the DMZ, the Mekong Delta, in several border provinces and near Saigon.

The Regional Force (RF) troops are remaining in static defensive positions to a lesser extent and are now actively engaging in operations against Viet Cong forces as well as performing pacifications work. Defense officials say the biggest need now is upgrading the quality of the Vietnamese forces through training and experience. Although all reports point to the fact that the Vietnamese armed forces are a lot better today than they were a year ago, there remains motivation, leadership and training, to be performed. Currently the South Vietnamese have a number of schools organized at NCO level and all the way up to a counterpart of the U.S. National War College for the training of senior commanders.

Training in the U.S. is straight across the board and involves several thousand Vietnamese men. For example, some are taking helicopter pilot training, others are becoming mechanics. Training is being accomplished in Army service schools, both in command as well as technical-type training. The Navy and the Air Force also conduct extensive training programs in the U.S. Primarily the students going to school here are learning the skills not available in Vietnam. Many of those that are trained here return to Vietnam and become instructors.

WORKING TOGETHER—Air Force Captain Thomas H. Wood, AC-119 Shadow gunship navigator, briefs Captain Nguyen Ky of the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) on capabilities of the gunships.

One Defense official said, "some people would say they have a long way to go, but they are moving and are making excellent progress in the right direction."

But what about U.S. troop redeployments, past, present and future? Are the Vietnamese ready to assume the added burden? Defense officials believe they are ready and point to the buildup of the Vietnamese armed forces which now numbers nearly one million men (Jan. 26, 1970) in RVN Armed Forces units (Regular, RF and PF), more than 100,000 more in paramilitary units and more than 3,200,000 unpaid volunteers in the People's Self-Defense Forces.

Proof the Vietnamese can hold their own is evident in the redeployment of more than 65,000 U.S. troops from Vietnam. This action leaves the lowest number of U.S. troops in Vietnam in more than two years. This redeployment represents about 12 per cent of U.S. combat forces. An additional 50,000 U.S. troops will depart from Vietnam by April 15, 1970. At that time the U.S. troop strength ceiling will be 434,000.

There has been some confusion as to just how troop redeployments are accomplished. It was explained that the individual service personnel policy makes the difference.

Basically, whether a particular unit is brought out of Vietnam intact depends on the over-all Defense-JCS plans as well as the plans of each service.

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America's Commitment To NATO

The U.S. and Western Europe—I

A major policy speech on the U.S. relationship to Western Europe and Western European security was recently delivered by Under Secretary of State Elliot L. Richardson. Pointing out that Senator Mike Mansfield has introduced in the Senate a resolution calling for "substantial reductions" of U.S. forces in Europe, Mr. Richardson analyzed the suppositions on which our European policy rests, its continuing validity, and the proposals being made for change.

Following is Part I of excerpts from Secretary Richardson's address of January 20. Part II will appear in a forthcoming issue.

Under Secretary of State Elliot L. Richardson

I would like today to examine one of the most fundamental of our foreign policy concerns, and one which in some ways is too much taken for granted, if not overlooked—the U. S. relationship to Western Europe and Western European security.

To much of the public the purposes of NATO have the character of a cliche. The very climate of security which NATO has fostered has, perversely, seemed to permit many to disregard it or to think it obsolete. In the wake of the re-examination of foreign commitments occasioned by the Vietnam war, there is a tendency by some to say that NATO has done its job, so why not bring those troops home?

In the U.S. Senate this feeling has taken concrete political expression in the form of a resolution introduced by Senator Mansfield, one of the most thoughtful students of America's role in world affairs. His resolution calls for "substantial reductions" of U.S. forces in Europe.

Meanwhile, Western Europe itself, prosperous, mostly democratic, stable, and probably more secure than at any time in its modern history, has been preoccupied with the inevitable problems that are the by-product of affluence and rapid economic growth. These concerns seem to have caused it to drift somewhat from the lofty goals of a Unified Europe and Atlantic partnership which gave a sense of mission to its leadership two decades ago.

On both sides of the Atlantic then, there are feelings of complacency and a restless anticipation of new events. The memory of Czechoslovakia is fading, the Brezhnev Doctrine is dimmer, and a reduced sense of danger merges with the feeling that new initiatives are both called for and inevitable.

Perhaps in response to this atmosphere the Warsaw Pact nations, led by the Soviet Union, have called for the convocation of a European Security Conference, although—ironically—their suggested agenda would not even touch the basic issues of European security.

In this situation, it is, I think, worthwhile to take a fresh look at the suppositions on which our European policy rests, to examine its continuing validity, and to appraise frankly and realistically the proposals being made for change and adjustment.

Basis for U.S. Policy

Two World Wars have led the American people to perceive with great clarity that the security of the United States is directly linked to the security of Western Europe.

Pursuant to this belief, which was formalized in the North Atlantic Treaty of 1949, the U.S. has maintained a major military establishment on European soil since the early 1950s. U.S. nuclear power as well as conventional forces are available in support of this treaty commitment.

Although Europe is now incomparably stronger than it was

when this arrangement was first contracted, its ultimate security, like our own, continues to be linked to our power and nuclear deterrence. Because of this, one of President Nixon's first acts upon taking office was to reaffirm the American commitment to NATO and to promise close and continuing consultation within the Alliance.

Deterrence is a subtle concept. Its reality takes form largely in the minds of those who might be contemplating aggression. It is effective only when they conclude that any possible advantages of aggression would be offset by its predictable costs.

NATO's strategy of flexible response is calculated to insure that any potential aggressor would come to just this conclusion.

Our conventional forces are maintained in position in Europe to resist possible attack by Warsaw Pact formations. They are meant also to deter piecemeal aggression which an enemy might be tempted to conclude he could get away with if the only alternative to our capitulation were the unleashing of nuclear war. These forces are supported by a broad arsenal of tactical nuclear weapons, available for use if the intensity of the aggression rises.

Tangible Evidence

The entire effectiveness of the flexible response strategy rests perforce on the conviction in both parts of Europe that the United States will fulfill its determined role. And the U.S. military presence in Europe, whether we like it or not, continues to be taken as tangible evidence of our commitment.

We must face the fact, therefore, that any sudden or dramatic reduction in the U.S. military presence in Europe would have unpleasant consequences of two kinds.

'The U.S. military presence in Europe, whether we like it or not, continues to be taken as tangible evidence of our commitment.'

- *First*, as a practical military matter, NATO's conventional defenses would be significantly weakened. Other NATO members might be tempted to follow suit and cut forces further. In the event of aggression, a less powerful NATO Alliance might be driven to resort more quickly to nuclear weapons.

- *Secondly*, and of probably greater consequence, any sudden or major withdrawal of American forces would have a distinctly destabilizing effect on the European scene.

The structure of the Alliance, as indeed the entire structure of world order which we have helped erect since the war, rests in the final analysis on the shared confidence that we shall honor our commitments.

If that confidence is eroded a rapid deterioration can occur —a deterioration not unlike that which can send prices on the stock market plummeting. And for this reason it is doubly necessary that we not lightly or hastily make moves that might undermine confidence in the strength of our support. It is for this reason that we have pledged to maintain our present troop strength in Europe through Fiscal Year 1971.

Let me stress that none of this suggests that U.S. troops will have to remain in Europe at present strength for ever and ever. Certainly we hope that future conditions will allow modifications of our role. Our current force level in Europe of 310,000 men already, in fact, represents a considerable drop from the peak of 408,000 in 1962 during the Soviet war of nerves on Berlin.

'A resolution introduced by Senator Mansfield, one of the most thoughtful students of America's role in world affairs . . . calls for "substantial reductions" of U.S. forces in Europe.'

We are also continually studying and trying to improve the means by which troops stationed in the U.S. can be rapidly returned to Europe in case of crisis. The Mansfield Resolution urges that greater use be made of this redeployment option.

Our studies show, however, that under present conditions front-line forces hastily returned to Europe in time of crisis could not carry out their mission with the same effectiveness as forces already in place. Although rapid redeployment of limited forces is feasible, large-scale efforts of this sort expose these forces to hazards and potential confusion.

Financial Savings Negligible

Moreover, financial savings would be negligible. If, for example, all of our current forces in Europe were brought home and stationed in this country, little or no savings would appear in our defense budget. We might even have to spend a bit more, because we would lose significant financial advantages.

In Germany, the Federal Government makes land, housing, facilities and services available to our forces at no cost, or at reduced cost. Duplicating such facilities and support in the U.S. would involve a heavy and continuing expense—one roughly cancelling out savings in shortened supply lines and transportation costs to Europe.

The balance-of-payments drain of our military deployment in Europe is currently about $1.5 billion a year. This is unquestionably a large figure, and, if our forces were returned to this country, many of those dollars would stay at home. The problem is partially neutralized, however, by offset arrangements with the European countries, particularly Germany, and we are exploring means of making these arrangements more adequate. In addition, withdrawal of our forces from Europe would be likely to evoke prompt countervailing effects, notably in reduced sale of military equipment to our Allies and in general exports to those countries.

The Military Man Personifies Young America—Secretary Kelley

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to build—not to destroy. This work involves a broad assortment of noncombat skills, which are the specialties of 83 per cent of the enlisted men and women in our Armed Forces today. They include skills in such critical functions as maintenance and repair of equipment, clerical and administrative activity, electronics, communications, intelligence and medicine. These skills are put to use in the peaceful work of nation building as well as in the tasks of combat. And in both of these dimensions of military life, the experts give our men and women top grades.

In a society where many young people are doing "their own thing" and where there is much anti-establishment talk, one wonders how so many seemingly undisciplined youngsters can become an effective military organization in such a short space of time. This brings to our second central point—which is, what do the Armed Forces do for America's youth?

First, military life stresses the infinite dignity and worth of the individual because this is the principle on which our country was founded. The central figure in the Armed Forces is the individual member whose dignity and worth derive from his relationship to God. There are those in our society who disagree that it should be this way, preferring that God be optional in the military. But God is ever present, and military people are reminded of His presence and our dependence on Him in many ways. This is the way the Armed Forces, with Congressional and Executive guidance, and the support and understanding of the American people, are determined it shall be in the future.

Second, from the first day of training the military man begins to learn the principles of organized activity. He comes to realize that it cannot be every man for himself, because his life and the lives of others depend upon how each does his job as an integral part of the total unit. In the magnificent tradition of the Marine Corps, young men are taught that, "If you have but one principle, let it be that no man shall ever feel that you have let him down."

Third, in the Armed Forces young people learn to lead, by learning first to follow. This may appear to stress the obvious. But in these confused times a special point needs to be made about leadership to answer a dissenting minority whose stock-in-trade is challenging symbols of authority.

Today's military leader tends to be more flexible, less authoritarian, and a better listener than his counterpart of earlier generations. But in the final analysis, there is still only one who gives the orders to march, and still only one who must make the command decision on which lives depend.

Fourth, young people in the Armed Forces learn order by having to comply with rules of conduct established for the common good. A continuing attempt is made to encourage participation and dialogue, but never in a way that could erode military security or compromise the safety of our men. In the military, rules are subject to challenge and review constantly, but they are not changed or repealed by the sheer force of opposing numbers, or because lazy people don't like them.

Finally, I wish to comment on how this youthful military organization has responded to two of the most difficult social problems in our American society—the problem of race relations and the problem of the so-called hard-core unemployables.

But before doing so, I want to take a moment on one of the most difficult of all human trials—that which confronts our POW's and their anxious families, and the families of those who are carried as missing in action because we don't know their status.

With its constant strain and personal anguish, I know of no aspect of the war which more clearly reflects the nobility and staying power of our people.

Some wives have gone abroad in search of information. Though by and large they have obtained little, they have rejected suggestions that they trade anti-war statements for knowledge about their husbands and sons. As one courageous wife said, "Yes, I want my husband back, but don't give my country away to do it." The North Vietnamese are discovering, as others have in the past, that the spiritual strength of young America is still deep and wonderfully resilient.

Now let's discuss military race relations.

The Armed Forces have a racial problem because our nation has one. There have been a few racial eruptions at military bases both in this country and overseas, and the biases that cause them are enlisting and being drafted into the Services each year. Most important is what the Armed Forces are doing to meet this problem.

I can report to you tonight that Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird has convened a special *Inter-Service Task Force* to develop an educational program on race relations to be used throughout the Armed Forces. Its membership will include enlisted personnel and officers from each military service, including minority group members.

This action is being taken because our own in-Service studies, and those of a special Congressional Committee convened to probe racial disturbances on military bases, showed clearly that good intentions are not enough. Military people need to be taught how to cope with the racial problem, and they must be taught in the context of the military life of which they are a part.

In addition, each of the military services is conducting an in-depth examination of its own communications to judge whether or not it promotes better understanding between races as a first step toward action to improve it. The objective is to assure a military setting in which young men and women listen to each other, come to understand each other's cultural differences, and finally, to develop mutual respect both for what they have in common and for what makes them different from each other.

Military commanders, sensitive to the racial problem, have taken many steps already to close the communications gap —starting with declaring and enforcing equality of treatment

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Secretary Laird Stresses Education on Race Relations

Every thoughtful study on race relations stresses stepped-up education on race relations and better communication channels as the answer to racial harmony and equality of opportunity.

Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird sees that as the key to solving the problem and making the services a model of equal opportunity although the military services have made "great progress" along those lines.

In a memorandum to the Secretaries of the Military Departments, the Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Assistant Secretary of Defense (M&RA) on January 28, 1970, Secretary Laird asked that the following steps be taken to speed-up the improvement of race relations in the Armed Forces.

He asked that:

1—An Inter-Service Task Force on Education in Race Relations should be formed. The initiative for its formation is assigned to ASD (M&RA) who in turn will ask each of the services for appropriate representation. Its function will be to develop an educational program on race relations to be used throughout the armed forces.

2—Each Military Service should examine in depth its own communications to judge whether or not it promotes better understanding between races, as a basis for then taking the steps necessary to improve it. Of course, improved communication and better racial understanding must be accomplished within the established lines of command, and by means that support, not supplant, the authority of the military commander.

There are many different communication vehicles available for use by military commanders. These include round-table discussions, panels, and human relations councils. More than anything else, the communication climate is set by the attitude and actions of those in command. The Secretary said, "I do not wish to prescribe on a centralized basis the special vehicles of communication appropriate in each command for these will vary according to the makeup of individual command groups, their needs, and the leadership styles of those in command. We are interested only in assuring racial harmony and equality of opportunity through appropriate hands."

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and opportunity, and then giving people some orderly channels to vent their gripes, questions and racial attitudes.

But before leaving this subject, it would be fitting to hear what a distinguished black American said recently on the subject of race relations in the Armed Forces. I refer to Lieutenant General Ben Davis, who completed his outstanding military career two days ago to accept the position as Director of Public Safety in the City of Cleveland. Here is General Davis' statement:

"Following the Civil War, the U.S. Army created the 9th and 10th Cavalry Regiment and the 24th and 25th Infantry Regiment. These organizations, composed of black soldiers and black non-commissioned officers, provided an honored position for black citizens in the U.S. Army during the initial period of freedom. Following World War II, all segregated units of the Armed Forces were eliminated. The Military Departments subsequently developed policies and administrative procedures which again placed the Armed Forces of the U.S. several steps ahead of the nation as a whole. Indeed to this day the black American has an equal opportunity for service to his country in the Armed Forces and for a career in these Armed Forces that is not surpassed, and is rarely equalled in the social structure of our nation."

Now let's talk briefly about "hard core unemployables." This term is supposed to describe a person who can't hold a job because no one wants him. He has failed to meet entrance standards wherever he goes and thus he becomes one of society's rejects.

The Armed Forces have enlisted in excess of 300,000 of these young men in the past three years. Under close observation, special training, and skilled supervision, they have performed well. These so-called unemployables have demonstrated that they are teachable; that firm discipline and effective supervision together with an opportunity to develop and express pride, go a long way toward overcoming the voids of a deprived environment; and that they much prefer to be proud and contributing members of our society. These are 300,000 young people who are living evidence that the American dream is realizable even for those whom some would abandon as the dregs of our society. Could this have happened as well, or as fast, or to so many, elsewhere than in our Armed Forces?

So here are some examples of youth in the Armed Forces. The young people I have described may not resemble the military profile that you read about because the "good guy" doesn't make big news. It's when the frail side of our human nature shows that military people hit the headlines—misusing government funds, copping out on drugs, stirring up racial hatred, deserting from the Service. Such things do happen in this vast organization whose members are drawn each year from all over the United States.

But the typical—and, unfortunately, the untold—story of young Americans in the military forces is a story of the acceptance of responsibility, however difficult and dangerous. It is a story of dedication to causes greater than self, and of deep concern for others, particularly those who need their help. Nowhere is this spirit manifested better and more often than in Vietnam. Vietnam is studded with schools and hospitals and orphanages and playgrounds which are monuments to the generosity and compassion of the young men and women who wear the uniform of our Armed Forces.

A French philosopher made the witty and somewhat cynical observation, *"Youth is such a splendid time of life. What a shame to waste it on the young."*

Our sons and daughters in the military forces are proving this quip to be wrong. Youth is not wasted on them. With the help of dedicated Americans such as your organization represents, they are making the most of the boundless energy, the quick minds, and the responsive consciences that are the precious gifts of the young.

One who sees them in action can only draw inspiration from their example, and unshakable confidence that our great country in the years ahead will be in good hands.

Senate Youth Group Expresses Interest, Views on Defense Issues

Secretary of Defense Melvin R. Laird discussed a variety of subjects—including an all-volunteer force—before the 1970 Senate Youth Program Group at the Pentagon recently.

The group, culled from students in every state, were those who had successfully competed in high school sponsorship contests. They are given a "short indoctrination" into the operation of the U.S. Senate and the Federal Government. Generally, they are students who have been elected to student-body offices.

For the past eight years, the cost of the program has been borne by the William Randolph Hearst Foundation. The original Senate resolution, which has been unanimously approved by each Senate since 1962, stipulates that the program should be arranged without cost to the government.

Secretary Laird said he was particularly happy for the opportunity to speak directly to young people about the programs of the Department of Defense, and asked for both questions and suggestions from his audience.

Following are portions of the discussion:

Q. To what extent is the U.S. involved in Thailand and Laos?

A. We have a Military Assistance Mission, as you know, in Thailand and we have (one) in Laos. There are no American combat forces of the Army or Navy involved. Of course, in the Laotian fighting which is currently taking place, we only have a Military Assistance Mission there at the present time. The President has made clear that we are conducting certain interdiction missions along the borders of Vietnam as far as the United States Air Force is concerned. We are continuing to fly reconnaissance missions. These reconnaissance missions are protected with armed aircraft and this is the major extent of our involvement at this time in Laos. As far as Thailand is concerned, we do have the Military Assistance Mission there, and we do have certain air operations and air bases which are operated in the Thailand area. There is no fighting at the present time, however, taking place in Thailand. The major fighting as far as the land war is concerned that does exist in those two countries is in Laos, but in that fighting which is taking place right today, American ground forces are not involved.

Secretary Laird and members of Senate Youth Group.

Q. Could you tell us exactly what the U.S. military commitment to SEA is in view of the Nixon Doctrine and also in view of what Vice President Agnew said in reassuring those people that we still would remain . . . in those areas?

A. They are spelled out in the basic treaty which has been approved by the Senate, the SEATO Treaty. President Nixon enlarged somewhat upon the definition of what those commitments were in his Guam statement. The third point which he made at Guam had to do with the commitment of U.S. ground troops in SEA in the future. This was a modification of the interpretation which was given to the SEATO Treaty by some previous administrations, but it is about the same interpretation that was given to the SEATO document at the time it was ratified in the U.S. Senate and proposed by General Eisenhower.

Q. If the U.S. were to establish a Volunteer Army, what would be the minimum number of troops needed in the U.S. to carry out the functions of the Department of Defense adequately?

A. I personally believe that you have to get down to a level for an all volunteer service before you can go to the all volunteer service near the two million mark. I do not believe that you can carry out and meet the present obligations which this country has under its present treaties at that particular level unless you are willing to spend a considerable amount of money in order to maintain a large, up-to-date, modern well-equipped Reserve and National Guard here in the U.S. The cost—as you move down to a regular strength of around two million—the costs to maintain the Reserve and National Guard go up considerably. So in answering your question, it's tied with dollars more than anything else. Certainly if we are going to move in the direction of a volunteer force we have to have the assurances that we can receive the additional financing that will be needed and necessary from the Congress.

Q. What would be your views on a system of universal conscription where all young persons would be required to serve perhaps a year in service of their country, offering perhaps as an alternative to military service, service in the Peace Corps, VISTA or some such program?

A. This is a matter which is being looked into at the present time by the all volunteer commission. I would hope that we could put the emphasis on volunteerism, not only for the Peace Corps but for the military service, for the VISTA. I hope that we can create an attitude of volunteerism in the U.S. so that young people would be willing to give up a certain amount of their time to this kind of work or to military service or to teaching or some of the other fields of endeavor that sometimes aren't compensated as well as others. If volunteerism can't be successful . . . if our studies show that we can't go in that direction, then as the next best system I would certainly choose the course that you recommend.

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